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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, December 1, 1941

SUBJECT: "BETTER BUDGET MEALS." Information from nutrition scientists at State experiment stations.

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You've been hearing a good deal lately about meals to give the family better nutrition and health. Most homemakers are interested in feeding their families to keep them fit. Maybe your meals are so perfect you couldn't improve them. Maybe your children and husband have perfect health. But most women who take the trouble to keep a record of meals and then check them with the nutrition yardstick, find many easy ways to make their meals better. They often find they're in a rut about food, and are eating only the same few foods day after day.

Perhaps you know that nutrition scientists at many State experiment stations have been working to help families improve their meals. For example, nutrition scientists at the Maine Station recently made a study of what children in typical families ate, and how their diets affected their health and growth. They found what nutrition workers in many other States have found--that meals are likely to contain too much refined flour, sugar, and fat, and not nearly enough milk, fruits and vegetables. These faults were worst in winter meals. Medical and dental examinations showed that the children's health in winter suffered accordingly.

So to help families have better and more healthful meals even when they have little money to spend, nutrition workers in Maine have just published some tips on food.

First, some suggestions for improving breakfast, dinner and supper. To

modernize an old-fashioned breakfast, add fruit and increase milk. At several breakfasts a week have orange or orange juice, tomato juice, grapefruit or grapefruit juice. (You get more vitamin C for your money if you eat an orange or grapefruit whole than you do from the juice squeezed from it. That tip comes from the Montana Station.) Cook breakfast cereal in milk instead of water. And have plenty of whole milk on the table to eat on cereal and for the children to drink.

About your noon dinner. Have more vegetables for dinner, and more different kinds of vegetables. Serve at least one vegetable besides potato. And frequently serve vegetables raw in freshly made relishes or salad. Give children milk to drink. Instead of old-fashioned puddings--heavy with sweet, starch and fat--have milk and fruit desserts.

As for supper, be sure to have one vegetable besides potato. Have a canned vegetable served hot, or vegetable scalloped, creamed, in cream soup, chowder, or raw in salad--but be sure to have it.

To save all possible vitamins and minerals in the vegetables, cook them as short a time as possible to make them tender, and use as little water as possible to cook them in. Never cook a big batch of vegetables to warm up meal after meal. That may save a little time, but it wastes much food value and flavor.

Now a few tips about important foods for every day. First, about green and yellow vegetables, and tomatoes, and citrus fruits. If you have space for a garden to raise vegetables for canning as well as to eat fresh, you're lucky. Wherever you can store cabbage, rutabagas and other vegetables rich in vitamin C, count on these foods in daily meals. If you must buy most of your fruit, canned grapefruit juice gives you the most value for your money when the fresh fruit is

high; canned tomatoes and tomato juice next; and canned orange juice third. Dried prunes, apricots and peaches are economical, and may be your best buy choice in fruits next to citrus fruits and tomato.

Now a few tips to help you meet your daily milk quota. Serve milk as a beverage for the whole family. But also use milk often in chowder, creamed dishes, milk soup and milk desserts. The Maine nutrition workers offer a list of 5 choices of food, about equal in food value, and suggest that you choose the one that is cheapest when you're planning economical meals. Here are the 5 choices: 1 quart fresh whole milk; or, 1 and a fourth cans of evaporated milk; or 5 ounces of cheddar cheese; or, 1 quart skim milk or buttermilk plus some green or yellow vegetables; or, one-fifth pound dry skim milk powder plus green or leafy vegetables.

Now a tip or two to help you plan main dishes for dinner or supper. For low-cost meals you can often get more value for your money if you have meat only 3 or 4 days a week and spend more for milk and vegetables. Liver gives you most of certain special food values. You can use beef and pork liver as well as the more expensive calves' liver. Kidney and heart are also cheap and nutritious. If you live near the coast, fresh seafoods are economical for the main dish. Canned salmon also gives good value for its cost. Dried beans and peas, and cheese can also make the main dish in a meal without meat. And at times of the year when eggs are cheap, they're a good choice in place of meat.

As for the fat to use in cooking, remember that lard goes farther than any other fat in making piecrust and is often the most economical shortening. For sweetening, use molasses as much as you can for its mineral value. Use whole-grain cereals and flour, or enriched flour, especially in low-cost meals.

Last tim of all. If you want a list of the foods you should have in family meals, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for the folder called "Eat the Right Food".